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Ms Jane Cartlidge
Southfield Primary School
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Dear Ms Cartlidge

Requires improvement: monitoring inspection visit to Southfield Primary School

Following my visit to your school on 22 September 2017, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave me and for the time you made available to discuss the actions you are taking to improve the school since the most recent section 5 inspection.

The visit was the first monitoring inspection since the school was judged to require improvement following the section 5 inspection in March 2017. It was carried out under section 8 of the Education Act 2005.

Senior leaders and governors are not taking effective action to tackle the areas requiring improvement identified at the last section 5 inspection in order for the school to become a good school.

Evidence

During the inspection, I met with you, the deputy headteacher and the chair of the governing body to discuss actions taken since the last inspection. I met with the leaders for English, mathematics, early years and the school's special educational needs leader. I also spoke with the phase leaders for early years, key stage 1 and key stage 2. I visited all classes, accompanied by you and looked at pupils' workbooks and spoke with them about their learning. I also spoke formally with a group of pupils. I considered a range of documentation, including the school's self-evaluation plan and subject leaders' action plans. I spoke with a school improvement adviser.

I scrutinised the safeguarding policy and the single central record. I also spoke with

parents and carers at the start of the school day.

Context

The acting deputy headteacher has now become the permanent deputy headteacher. She leads mathematics and Years 5 and 6. She is joined by a newly appointed phase leader for Years 3 and 4 who leads on supporting the community through the school's website and family forum. The early years leader and key stage 1 leader were appointed to their leadership roles in the previous academic year. The key stage 1 leader is the newly appointed leader for English.

Main findings

You have a newly formed leadership team. You have accurately identified the areas for improvement in the school's development plans. You have distributed actions to subject and phase leaders so that school improvement can be addressed rapidly and consistently across the school. However, you acknowledge that regular checking on the quality of teaching and learning is a key priority alongside precise feedback given to teachers. You have made pupils' achievement a high priority and ensured that this is understood by your new leadership team through regular discussions and frequent checks on pupils' learning.

Current subject improvement plans are being developed with the new leadership team. You recognise that precise measures of success and the need for regular monitoring and evaluation are a high priority. Phase leaders monitor pupils' achievement in their phases and provide regular feedback to you. They know that providing incisive feedback to teachers is important to raise standards. The leadership team has planned training in place for teachers and a range of activities to check rigorously that the quality of teaching and learning is improving rapidly. It is too soon to evaluate these actions and assess any improvements made.

You acknowledge the importance of developing leaders' skills and expertise. The school has recently joined the Swan Teaching School Alliance so that you are able to select appropriate training and development opportunities for leaders and teachers. The school is also part of a local cluster of schools where teachers are able to moderate their judgements on pupils' progress. The expertise of a school improvement consultant has also supported the development of leaders in the school. She has checked on their knowledge of pupils' assessment information, systems to monitor progress and the effectiveness of their actions to improve pupils' outcomes. The newly formed leadership team needs more time to put priorities in place and to monitor and evaluate them effectively so they can assess improvements in the quality of teaching and learning.

During the monitoring visit, I spoke with the leaders for English and mathematics.

The newly appointed English leader acknowledges that there is still more work to be done to raise pupils' achievement in reading, particularly listening to pupils read more frequently and the development of pupils' comprehension skills. For example, she is developing pupils' comprehension, vocabulary and fluency skills using a reading programme. She acknowledges the importance of parental support to ensure that pupils read as often as possible both at home and at school. Recent provisional pupil assessment information shows that in 2017, the proportion of pupils achieving the expected standard and above at the end of key stage 2 was slightly lower than the school's results in 2016. The English leader recognises that there is still more work to be done to raise pupils' outcomes in this subject. The action plan for English is currently being finalised and it is too soon to evaluate improvements in the quality of reading.

Teachers recognise that listening to pupils read frequently is a high priority in the school in order to check on pupils' reading and comprehension skills. Teachers have introduced reading logs that focus on developing pupils' comprehension skills. The English leader has made the development of reading a high priority in her action plan. She has also planned a reading information event so that parents have the skills to support their children reading at home. However, she recognises that these developments need addressing urgently to ensure that there is an improvement in pupils' outcomes.

The deputy headteacher, who is also the mathematics leader, has recently taken on this subject area. She acknowledges that although teachers are providing more opportunities for pupils to develop their problem-solving and reasoning skills, more training is needed to build on teachers' expertise and levels of confidence. She is confident that further training will support teachers to develop their expertise in this area. She recognises that teachers do not consistently provide regular problem-solving and reasoning activities in lessons so that pupils become more fluent using these skills. She knows that she must check on the quality of teaching and learning regularly to ensure that pupils make rapid progress in this area.

In addition, the mathematics leader has introduced new teaching and learning strategies to support pupils to make even more rapid progress. She has visited other schools to learn new approaches to mathematics and received support from a school consultant to develop her leadership skills. Further, the mathematics leader has commissioned the support of a senior leader in education for mathematics so that she can receive bespoke support for the school for the development of mathematics. Nevertheless, you and the subject leaders recognise that more time is needed to show the impact of recent actions taken to improve teaching and learning consistently across the school. You also recognise that further development of reading and mathematics skills through other subjects is crucial to further improve pupils' outcomes.

Teachers quickly check on pupils' learning by asking pertinent questions to ensure pupils have understood the task. Teachers provide a range of resources to support

pupils' learning. For example, they are able to use equipment in their mathematics lessons to help them understand the value of individual digits in numbers. Higher-attaining pupils are provided with appropriate challenges. However, you recognise that this is not always consistent and remains a development point for the school.

During our tour of the school, pupils showed focused levels of concentration in lessons. Pupils who spoke to me said that they enjoyed their lessons and were able to describe the attributes of an effective learner. Pupils said they like receiving rewards.

You recognise the importance of using accurate assessment information so that teachers are able to provide suitable tasks that challenge pupils, particularly the most able. The provisional assessment information for 2017 shows that the proportion of pupils attaining the expected and higher standard in mathematics at the end of key stage 2 was lower than last year's school information. During my visit, you told me that the school was conducting an assessment week so that you and your teachers have accurate baseline assessment information. You and your team will also moderate pupils' assessment information regularly throughout the year at pupil progress meetings and local cluster meetings. You know that accurate assessment information is vital to ensure that appropriate tasks are set for pupils so that they make rapid progress. It is too soon to evaluate this aspect of school development.

During our visit to the early years, you explained to me that more writing opportunities had been incorporated in to the learning activities, both inside and outside of the classroom. For example, you highlighted the importance of ensuring that children have opportunities to practise their writing skills at the water and sand tables. On this occasion, you recognise that this was not part of the children's learning and that learning was not as purposeful as it could be. The early years leader knows the importance of providing such activities and stated that children were settling in to their new classroom environment at the start of the school term.

New resources in the early years have been purchased and these resources will be routinely planned in to the curriculum as the new term progresses. The early years leader has increased the number of writing tables and tools, created a portable writing kit and used recording devices to challenge children in their learning. Provisional assessment information shows that the proportion of pupils reaching the expected standard in writing at the end of the early years is slightly lower than in 2016. Overall, the proportion of children achieving a good level of development in 2017 is broadly in line with last year's national average. More time is needed to develop the learning environment and to fully integrate the new resources in to daily learning activities.

Ofsted may carry out further monitoring inspections and, where necessary, provide further support and challenge to the school until its next section 5 inspection.

External support

You have increased the level of external support to help you improve the quality of the school's work. You have commissioned the services of a school improvement consultant and senior leader in education to improve the quality of teaching and learning and develop subject leaders' skills. You have also recently joined the Swan Teaching School Alliance that offers a suite of professional development to develop teaching and learning. Nevertheless, you recognise that more time is needed to assess the impact of recent actions taken by the new leadership team on improving the quality of teaching and learning.

I am copying this letter to the chair of the governing body, the regional schools commissioner and the director of children's services for Northamptonshire. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Emma Nuttall
Her Majesty's Inspector